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Upatissa Sutta

The Upatissa Discourse | S 21.2/2:274 f
 Theme: Sāriputta's perception of the Buddha
 Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2007, 2013

Introduction

1 The Upatissa Sutta (S 21.2) is a short and simple discourse on the arhat's right attitude towards the fleeting nature of existence. An arhat—in this case, Sāriputta,¹ the wisest of the monks after the Buddha himself—would not in any way be affected by the impermanence of the world. Even though his own teacher, the Buddha, is subject to “change and becoming-other,” he would not undergo sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair. The reason for this is that Sāriputta, as an arhat, has understood the true nature of reality, and is as such beyond suffering.

2 On the other hand, Sāriputta has great faith in the Buddha. Even though Sāriputta has realized awakening through his own efforts, he is grateful to the Buddha for teaching the Dharma that he has realized. As such, his faith in the Buddha is not that of blind belief or some kind of certification of his status by the Buddha. It is through his own realization of true reality that he fully understands the truth and value of the Buddha Dharma.²

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The Upatissa Discourse

S 21.2/2:274 f

1 Originating in Sāvathī.

2 There the venerable Sāriputta addressed the monks thus,

“Avuso bhikshus!”

“Avuso!” the monks answered the venerable Sāriputta in assent.

3.1 The venerable Sāriputta said this:

“Here, avuso, when I was in solitary retreat, a reflection arose in my mind thus:

‘Is there anything in the world, on account of its change and becoming-other [alteration], might cause sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair to arise in me?’³

3.2 Then, avuso, it occurred to me thus:

‘There is nothing in the world, on account of its change and becoming-other, would cause sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair to arise in me.’”

4 When this was said, the venerable Ānanda said this to the venerable Sāriputta:

“Avuso Sāriputta, but what about the Teacher himself, wouldn't change and becoming-other in him cause sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair to arise in you?”

¹ On Sāriputta, see Piya Tan, *The Buddha and His Disciples*, Singapore, 2013: ch 5; on his gratitude, see **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28) @ SD 14.14 (2).

² See **Sampasādanīya S** (D 28/3:99-116), SD 14.14. See also **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8 (5.6.2). Cf Dh 97: **Pubba Koṭṭhaka S** (S 48.44,7/5:221), SD 10.7.

³ *Atthi nu kho taṃ kiñci lokasmim, yassa me vipariṇāṃ'aññathā, bhāva uppajeyyūṃ soka, parideva, dukkha, domanass'upāyāsātī.*

5 “Avuso,⁴ even change and becoming-other in the Teacher himself would not cause sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair to arise in me.

However, this would occur to me:

‘Even the Teacher, so mighty, so powerful, so glorious, has vanished!’⁵

But, if the Blessed One were to live for a long time, that would be for the good and happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of devas and humans.’⁶

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6 “Indeed, it must be that I-making, mine-making, and the latent tendency of conceit have been fully uprooted in the venerable Sāriputta for a long time.⁷

7 Therefore, even change and becoming-other in the Teacher himself would not cause sorrow, lamentation, physical pain, mental pain, and despair to arise in him.”

— evaṃ —

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⁴ Be Ce Se *Āvuso*; Ee *Avuso sārīputta* [wr]. See S:RD 2:185 n4.

⁵ This is only Sāriputta’s reflection: the Buddha has not yet passed away. In fact, Sāriputta predeceased the Buddha: see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16.1.16/2:82 f) = SD 9n.

⁶ *Mahēsakkho vata bho, sathā antarahito mah’iddhiko mahā’nubhāvo, sace hi bhagavā ciraṃ dīgham-addhānaṃ tiṭṭheyya, tad assa bahu.jana,hitāya bahu.jana,sukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya deva,manussānan’ti.*

⁷ Comy says that this alludes to Sāriputta’s arhathood as recorded in **Vedanā Pariggaha S = Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74.9-14/1:500,8-501,5), SD 16.1.